

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity  
as it was in the beginning.*

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## THIS TESTIMONY

NEARLY everything we say or do either pleases or displeases someone. We sometimes go to great lengths to please people. We have all seen the 'hen-pecked' husband scurrying around trying not to offend his 'better-half' just as we have seen the would-be bridegroom fawning over, and in constant attendance to, the young bride to be. We have seen the 'tied' farm servant 'touching the forelock' as the Lord of the Manor glides past in his shiny Rolls Royce, and we have seen mother watching the expression on the faces of her guests as they sampled her meat-roll. Within our own little circle we try and please everyone as far as possible. Our employers we *must* please while others we deign to please. Some folks are very difficult to please and we sometimes end up not caring whether we please them or not.

It has been said, probably rightly, that we can't please everyone and if we please some we automatically displease others. This is especially true where factions and 'camps' exist. Paul capitalised upon this principle when he confronted the Council and caused a great dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:7). In order to avoid displeasing someone we often avoid taking up a position on an issue and we 'sit on the fence' and 'reserve judgement'. Thus moral cowardice is common to us all whether it be avoiding to state the blunt truth about what we really think of our wife's new hat or whether it be the rather more serious dereliction of duty on the part of the chief rulers who believed on Jesus as Christ but were scared to say it because the Pharisees would put them out of the synagogue (John 12:42). Are we ever scared to say what we really believe because we may displease some person or faction? Consider the floggings and imprisonments some of the apostles suffered because what they said displeased some of their fellow men and indeed their Jewish brethren. Paul's attitude was summed up in Gal. 1:9,10, when he said, "For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ". The gospel and doctrines of Christ quite transcends man and the puny mind of men and so the pleasing or displeasing of men is of little real significance.

Paul could have pleased some of his friends, and even some of his enemies, by tailoring the message to accommodate the thinking of his times but there was little chance of that. Do we adapt the message or use the soft pedal or the kid glove to please anyone? When going on a mission, Paul's preoccupation was not what the hotels would be like but how bad the prisons

would be. His words are worth a repeat, "For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ..." In stark contrast to the strength of character and integrity of the apostle Paul consider persons like Herod, Felix and Festus. Concerning Herod we read, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews he proceeded further to take Peter also" (Acts 12:1). As I remarked at the outset we can go to great lengths to please others. Regarding Felix, we read "Felix willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound" (Acts 24:27). Of Festus we read, "But Festus willing to do the Jews a pleasure answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me" (Acts 25:9).

Quite apart from our efforts to please *others* there are also the lengths we may go to to please *ourselves* - to go our own selfish way in spite of the consequences our actions may have on others. Sometimes men please themselves at the expense of others. We see a fair amount of this today in our troublous economic times when men are prepared to strike and withdraw labour regardless of the consequences on others and attendant hardships. The apostles were unquestionably uncompromising on matters of God's truth and apostolic doctrine but in other matters tried to live peaceably with all men and give offence to none. It was in this context that the apostle Paul spoke these words - "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved".

'Profitmaking' seems a dirty word these days in the current political upsurge of socialist ideas but apparently Paul did everything with the profit motive - albeit not his own personal gain but the spiritual profit of the many, that they might be saved - a far cry, mark you, from subjugating God's truth to please men. On *pleasing ourselves* Paul sums the matter up in Rom. 15:1-3 when he says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and *not to please ourselves*. Let everyone of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself but as it is written. The reproached of them that reproached thee fell on me".

What then is required of us? First priority is not so much to please others and certainly not to please ourselves but to please God. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, *that he pleased God*" (Heb. 11:5). What a wonderful testimony to which to aspire. God's own personal testimony of His beloved Son was that in Him He was *well pleased* (Matt. 17:5) and Jesus Himself said, "And He that sent me is with me: and the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always the things which please Him" (John 8:29).

May it be that we shall also try to do the things which please Him.

John reminds us that whatsoever we ask of Him we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22) and the writer to the Hebrews exhorts us not to forget to do good and be liberal with acts of charity *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased* (Heb. 13:16).

Has God good cause to be pleased with us?

EDITOR.

## WORSHIP

DOES the way we worship matter? Many would say no, providing we are sincere, I believe it does matter. Evidently there are two aspects to worship, what we do and what we feel inside. There are several Greek words in the New Testament translated 'worship'. The most frequent are *proskuneo*, *sebomai* and words derived from them. In most instances *proskuneo* stresses the outward action (*pros-* towards, *Kuneo* - to kiss), e.g. acts of obeisance, Matt. 18:26, and Matt. 28:9. All that Satan wanted Jesus to do was to fall down and perform an act of obeisance Matt. 4:9, but Jesus refused to do even that Matt 4:10. Some would say that it does not matter what

you do in such circumstances as long as you don't really mean it. From Jesus words in Matthew chapter 10 verses 16 to 39 (note verse 33) it will be seen that even under the threat of persecution and death it is a serious thing merely to utter words of denial.

The other word *sebomac* stresses the inner feeling of awe and devotion. It is the word translated 'devout' in Acts 13:50 and Acts 17:4 and 17. Before continuing please read the account of the woman at the well in John chapter 4 verses 1 to 42.

It always amazes me that such profound teaching was given privately to this wicked woman teaching which concerns all Jesus' followers even down to the present day. "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" v.v. 23,24. I deeply desire to be the kind of worshipper that the Father is looking for, don't you? Perhaps up till now you hadn't given it a thought that God might want to have a say in how you worship him. Maybe now you are beginning to see that if you want to be a true worshipper you will have to give this matter a little more thought. It will come as a surprise to some to learn that in this chapter the word translated worship is *proskuneo* – the outward action. The woman's enquiry was concerning outward action "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship". The Samaritans worshipped in ignorance "Ye worship that which ye know not". They had no authority for doing what they did. The Jews had authority for what they did, "We worship that which we know". The Pharisees often did the correct things but their inner feelings were wrong (see Matthew chapter 23 verses 23 and 24). Admittedly in John chapter 4 the essential spiritual aspect of worship is emphasised – there is no longer legislation governing where or in what kind of building we worship, providing our worship is in spirit and in truth – but we must bear in mind that both aspects of worship are important, "these things ye ought to have done and not to have left the other undone". We must not ignore or neglect divine legislation where it is relevant to the christian era. Our inner attitude: "in spirit", and our actions: "in truth", are both vitally important: "must".

Where can we find the 'truth'?

On the night in which he was betrayed Jesus prayed for the eleven and for you and me; "them also that believe on me through their word that they may be one – in us that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20-21). In that prayer he said "sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth". So to be a true worshipper of God, our hearts must be sincere and our acts of worship must be those authorised by the word of God. I think you will agree that a sincere person learning this will automatically want to do those things and only those things that God has authorised.

What about all those sincere people who are doing all sorts of acts of worship which have no authority from God? Are they wasting their time? I believe they are. Worse, they have replaced some of the things God has asked for with other rituals. Worse still they claim to do these unauthorised acts "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". Isn't this blasphemy? Dear friend be sure that what you do has got God's authority before you claim to be doing it in His name.

It is such a situation as this that Jesus illustrates in Matthew chapter 15. I suggest that you read now Matthew 15 verses 1 to 20 and Isaiah chapter 29 verses 9 to 14.

Just as to some people today, the prayer book or the creed or the Book of Mormon has become at least as important as the Bible, the traditions of the elders had become as important as the Word of God to the Pharisees. The word translated worship in this chapter is *sebomai* – the inner feeling of awe and devotion.

The pharisees may have been very sincere in their traditions, even to such a degree that they would be afraid not to carry them out in case they offended God, but in carrying out one such

tradition; the dedicating of themselves and all their belongings to religious service, they could without a qualm of conscience completely disregard their aged parents needs, thus rendering ineffective God's command to honour parents.

No doubt one would be reluctant to deny that giving all of ones belongings to religious service is a good thing. Many human traditions have apparently honourable praiseworthy motives, but Jesus quotes Isaiah saying "in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrine the precepts of men". It doesn't matter how much one feels in awe of God in carrying out human precepts, it's "in vain", worthless, to no effective purpose, a waste of time.

'Ministers', 'priests', 'vicars' etc. will try to impress you with their learning and insist on the practice of such human traditions as 'infant baptism', claiming God's authority, trying to make you feel guilty for not carrying out their ceremonies, just like the pharisees used to do (Matt. 15:2). Bear in mind Jesus' reply regarding the Pharisees; "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit".

ALLAN ASHURST

## IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

Before me is a future all unknown

A path untrod;

Beside me is a friend well loved and known

That Friend is God.

Before me lies a new and untried way

Midst shadows dim.

Beside me is my guide, and day by day

I walk with Him.

### PERFECT COMPANION — "FOR THOU ART WITH ME" PSALM 23:4

CASTING my mind back to my boyhood days, I remember, when visiting my grandmother's home, I had to pass, in the winter nights, two dark openings. We knew little in those days of the four minute mile, and I do not pretend that my scampering past those backs (a Lancashire word for openings) would create a record, but I can tell you that my legs did work overtime as I ran, when I was alone. When I had someone with me of course, there was no need to be afraid. Why then should David be fearful and afraid? in these circumstances, he found himself, full of confidence, for he had someone with him, his Lord was by his side. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" Psalm 23:4. On another occasion he said: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Psalm 139:7-12

I am reminded of the dark days of the war, about the years 1940 or 1941, we had a niece staying with us, a beautiful and charming little girl of about five. (One who by the way could ask some very awkward questions to her uncle, here are two, "Where do your whiskers come from? How does your whiskers stick in? Perhaps one of our readers could oblige, and send me the answer. Those were the days of the black-out, and I can still remember that little hand in mine as we went to the meeting. She had every confidence in the one who held that hand tightly.

Shall we remind ourselves again of what the Psalmist said: "Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me". He can be to us a PERFECT COMPANION, take His hand, let Him hold you, then you also can say, "FOR THOU ART WITH ME". One morning

I arose very early, having the desire to work on this article. From behind the curtains, I had great pleasure in watching a bird search for food on my lawn, and thoroughly enjoying its breakfast. Now I know for the first time the value of the lesson of the saying, "The early bird catcheth the worm". That bird did not know I was watching its movements, and from the incident we can get a very valuable lesson, we can be assured if we are one of God's children, then we can experience His loving care and watchfulness, as we seek daily to walk in His ways.

At times we strain our eyes, looking too far down the valley, anxious to see tomorrow's paths, we forget that He is with us, and watching our every movement. So, why not one step at a time:—

Lead, kindly Light...  
 Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
 The distant scene — One step enough for me.

Solomon one of the wisest of men said: "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened" Proverbs 4:12. The Hebrew of that verse reads, "As thou goest step by step, the way shall open up before thee". The hymn writer puts it beautifully when he wrote:

"One step I see before me; 'Tis all I need to see:...  
 And sweetly through the silence comes His loving "follow Me"!"

#### The Perfect Companion — "For Thou Art With Me"

God wonderfully led His people out of the land of Egypt: "He...made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not" Psalm 78:50-53.

Oh, child of God, get hold of this lesson, He guided them...He led them on safely...take God's hand, accept God's plan for your life, and walk God's road, and all will be well. Let us thank God for those of His servants, who have accepted His plan for their life, and as a result have suffered much for the Lord's sake.

Thank God for the people willing to go  
 Through the valley of weeping and never to know,  
 At least not till later, the blessing that fell  
 Upon others who drank from their sorrow-dug well.

If you do get down in the dumps at times, or at Wit's end corner, read the Don't worry verses of Matthew chapter 6:25-34, then turn to our own Psalm and read:

The Lord is MY shepherd; I shall not want.

HE maketh ME to lie down in green pastures: HE leadeth ME beside the still waters.

HE restoreth MY soul: HE leadeth ME in the paths of righteousness for HIS name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for THOU art with ME; THY rod and THY staff they comfort ME.

THOU preparest a table before ME in the presence of mine enemies: THOU anointest MY head with oil; MY cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow ME all the days of MY life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever".

Remember if you are HIS you can never be alone, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" Joshua 1:5. Repeat this with me slowly: "FOR THOU ART WITH ME". If that is a blessed reality, it means we can have someone with us all the time, on the mountain top, on the plain, in the valley, in or out of the sheepfold. Let us take courage and live every moment of every day to the full, you can help yourself to do this, if you accept the invitation of the Lord, through His inspired Apostle Peter, 1st Epistle chapter 5 verse 7 "Casting all your care (anxiety) upon him; for he careth for you". You do the casting, He will do the caring. There is nothing more sure that we have a need of His presence in our lives, William James realized this when he wrote to his friend that he was "Less and less able to get along without God". Take hold then of this day, it is yours, it is mine, and in the words of the Psalmist "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" Psalm 71:16.

There is a beautiful incident in the life of Jesus, which can give us a valuable lesson. After His resurrection two of His disciples were walking to a village called Emmaus, about threescore furlongs from Jerusalem. They were talking together of the things that had happened, when Jesus himself drew near, AND WENT WITH THEM, had they known then, they could have said "For thou art with me". But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" Luke 24:13-16. He was with them, yet they did not know it at that time. I wonder whether there are times in our lives, when we neglect to realize His presence. May our prayer be that our eyes may be opened, that we may see a little of His beauty, and glory, so that we may be inspired to serve Him better. May it be said of us: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him" Luke 24:31. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? Luke 24:32.

#### The Perfect Companion – "For Thou Art With Me"

What a glorious thought that mighty man of God, the Apostle Paul gives us in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me". Stay there for a moment Paul while I grasp this marvellous truth. Not only can we have our Lord Jesus by our side, walk and talk with him, but we can have him living inside, for you did say Paul "Christ liveth in me". "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" verse 20.

#### The Perfect Companion – "For Thou Art With Me" "Christ Liveth In Me"

"I need not journey far, this distant Friend to see,  
Companionship is always mine; He makes His home with me.  
I envy not the twelve; nearer to me is He,  
The life He once lived here on earth He lives again in me".

#### "HE LIVES AGAIN IN ME"

"Not I, but Christ, my every need supplying;  
Not I, but Christ, my strength and health to be;  
Christ, only Christ, for spirit, soul and body;  
Christ, only Christ, live then Thy life in me".

#### "LIVE THEN THY LIFE IN ME"

And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

This month's exercise:— Read the Don't worry verses Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke:24:13-35, and learn by heart Galatians 2:20. LEONARD MORGAN.

## GETHSEMANE

FEW people had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane, the majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of "THE AGONY". Occupied with the passover feast in their own houses or homes they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and suckling as to the spirit of the gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness of grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the ordinary gaze of believers. To the twelve (Nay, to eleven only) was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and view this great sight, out of the eleven were left some distance away, true to say they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favoured disciples who had been with their Lord and Master on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had witnessed the life giving miracle in the house of Jairus, only these three could approach the veil of His mysterious sorrow, within that, even these must not intrude, for a stone's cast must be left between. Our Lord must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with him.

Peter and the two Sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced, grace taught saints, who may be written down as "Fathers" these having done business on great waters, can

in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer's passion having been close and with Him alone on so many occasions, could read His heart and thoughts far better than those who merely gazed on Him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given for the good of others and to strengthen them for some future, special and tremendous conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest. Yet even these the elect, out of the elect, these choice and peculiar favourites among the King's courtiers, even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Saviour's woe, as to comprehend all His agonies.

"Thine unknown sufferings" is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy, for there is an inner chamber in His grief, shut away from human knowledge and fellowship.

Was not Watts the Hymn writer correct when he says:-

"And all the unknown joys He gives,  
Were bought with agonies unknown"

Since it would not be possible for any believer, however experienced he or she may be, to know for themselves all that our Saviour endured in the place of the Olive Press, when he was crushed between the upper and the nether mill stone, of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly beyond comprehension to set it by any standard. Jesus himself must give the access to the wonders of Gethsemane, for apart from that, then one can but be invited to enter the garden first bidding that you first put off your shoes from your feet for the place in that garden is holy ground. His beloved disciple tells us that for four days before Gethsemane Our Lord's Soul was very sorrowful, for He said "Now is my soul troubled" as he saw the gathering clouds in the near distance. He hardly knew just where to turn to for he said, "What shall I say". Jeremiah uses strong language of the text, "Being in agony" quoting the well known prophetic exclamation. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow". Here perhaps for the first time Our Lord realised just how deep and agonising His suffering were as they stood side by side with SIN. Here the words, "HE who knew no sin" was made sin for each one of us. On that dark night, the words of Isaiah were fulfilled when the prophet said, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". At that very hour heaven looked down on Jesus, standing in the sinners stead taking the cruel treatment which by right should have been laid on each one of us. As He waited in the garden our Lord foresaw the speedy coming of the traitor disciple, the seizure by the officers, the mock trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, and Herod, the scourging and buffeting, the crown of thorns, the shame and the spitting. Yet there was a more fruitful tree of bitterness for him, now that His Father in Heaven began to forsake him and to draw from His presence just when He needed Him most. The comforts that He received in the garden amidst the Olives in His prayer were taken away. Our Saviour could then very well say more than any hour of His agonies, even beyond the forty days conflict in the wilderness could say, "The prince of this world cometh". And still while our Saviour suffered His thoughts would go to Peter, James and John saying, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. This thought ought to be written into the heart of every christian. But then what about the blood and the sweat which fell from His brow; this was not just ordinary blood.

There appears to my mind one important thing here that this intense suffering ought to remind us that His love for mankind was the Mighty Power of His love for the sinner. We cannot realise just how intense was the suffering that our Saviour had for us to redeem us from sin and to prepare us for that place where we shall not have the problems which now confront us. Do we not perceive as Christ's followers how intense must have been His suffering even before He went to Golgotha. Here we should listen to the voice which tells us, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin". When we are tempted and we desire to overcome this temptation the best weapon we can acquire is prayer. When we cannot use the sword and the shield, then we should take to ourselves, the famous weapon of "ALL PRAYER" let us take note that it was a lonely prayer, for He withdrew from His three most devoted disciples about a stone's cast. A private prayer is the key to open heaven and so it should also be the key to close the gates of hell. Family prayer, prayer in the church (although they are very precious) cannot be compared to Private Prayer where no ears but the ears of God listens. To every convinced sinner this is a comfort, let us take more opportunities to get into closer contact with our heavenly Father in private solitude.

W.S. BRADLEY. Bawtry

## RESOURCES WITHIN

IN Isaiah chapter 58, verse 11, God promises:— "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not"

"I have a wonderful storehouse,  
Reserved in Heaven for me;  
Access to it was given  
By Jesus at Calvary".

Every child of God has access to unlimited resources which are supplied to us through the precious word of God. Like a spring of water, whose waters fail not, they are always there for every time of need. This defines the difference between the follower of Jesus and the worldling. There is no trial, distress, anxiety, or woe which the child of God is not able to face, because within there are these unlimited resources, which enable him or her to overcome.

When Jesus died on Calvary, He opened up a new and living way by which, access was given into the divine presence of God, and to His mighty power. Because of it, there is now an ability to overcome the world. "For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

There is no need to be hungry, when the larder is full of good things for the taking. No need to thirst, when living water flows to slake the thirst of those who seek. No room for despair, when joys innumerable are there for the asking. No reason for defeat, when He who conquered assures us that we are "More than conquerors" through Him.

"Jesus has kindly promised  
To stay close by my side,  
And if I tap these resources,  
He ever with me will abide".

Not only by our side, but also within us, is the presence of the Living Jesus. We are not only submerged, but overwhelmed by His abiding spirit. There is nothing that assails us in life that He does not know about. There is neither grief, nor sickness, adversity nor trial, in which He does not associate Himself, and through His precious word gives comfort, relief and triumph.

As in our homes we tap the water line for cleansing, for the alleviation of thirst, so in our spiritual lives, we tap the wondrous resources of His truth which we have laid up in our hearts, that we might have cleaner thoughts and purer lives. Within, we become a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

"I know I am weak and helpless,  
But I will not run away,  
For I have His wonderful promise  
To be my strength and stay".

Real spiritual strength comes from the realization of our own weakness and a dependence upon God. When we know that God is with us, and will never leave nor forsake us, then we do not need to run away from trouble, anxiety, and the varying difficulties of life, for they will soon find us again. In God's strength, summoning our inward resources, we can face our trials, and through His grace, cause them to flee from us. He who trod life's thorny pathway, and endured its hardships, its sorrows, and its ever prevailing worries and cares, is well able to strengthen and sustain those who lean upon Him, and for this purpose has given to us these unlimited resources to store within.

Let us all be able to say:—

"I have resources within,  
To help me strive against sin;  
OH! what should I do dear Lord without you,  
And precious resources within".



## QUESTION BOX

WE regret that there will be no 'Question Box' this month owing to brother Marsden having injured his hand. Readers, no doubt, would like me to wish our brother a quick recovery and to take this opportunity of thanking him for the good work he does for the 'S.S.'. We look forward to his article appearing next month. Brother Marsden has changed his address by the way, to:—

377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, and in future all communications for 'Q.B.' should be sent there. EDITOR

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

## SEPTEMBER 1975

7—Nehemiah 4:6-23	2 Thess. 3
14—Daniel 12	Revelation 1
21—Ezekiel 1:1-21	Revelation 2:1-17
28—Ezekiel 1:22-28	Revelation 2:12-29

### THE TRIVIAL ROUND, THE COMMON TASK

THE concluding chapter of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians places emphasis on working for a living. We have a saying that there is always work for the willing. It is doubtful whether this can be sustained as a fact in modern society, but the general principle is sound. Paul's striking and severe statement of the relation between working and eating (verse 10), places a responsibility upon every christian to be a worker, not a shirker. Of course this refers to willingness, not ability.

It appears that some Thessalonians had been excessively excited and disturbed (2:2) by prospect of immediate return of the Saviour from heaven. This had developed into wanton idleness. They had been commanded by the apostle to work for their living, and outstanding example was given of this teaching in earnest labour. Disobedience in this respect involves the members of the church in giving warning by withdrawing association, and admonishing any idlers. Christian and in fact all Bible teaching gives no excuse for wanting more money for less work, and present national and international crises can immediately be cured

by more work for less money. This gives no excuse for sweated labour but a fair sharing of the burdens and a willingness on the part of all to do the menial tasks. In a sinful world we can hardly hope for any complete solution because "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). Both the command and correction of the disobedient also appear in the Galatian letter in preceding verses, which please read. Brotherly treatment, definitely not hostility, promotes the cure.

### A "Difficult" Book

It is eight years since we suggested "Revelation" for public reading in the assemblies, and we have not deliberately avoided this. We do recognise the general feeling that it is a portion of scripture more difficult to understand than the other parts, and more subject to misuse through misinterpretation. He would be a bold man who claimed complete understanding of all its parts. It is with a sense of humble incompetence that I write the notes on the book, but very much hope we shall all find help, encouragement and inspiration from our study.

J.B. Phillips has written an introduction to his translation of this book which explains that there is a difference in the original language from all the other New Testament books. It indicates an ecstatic condition of the writer's mind due to the unique character of the revelation, indicated in fact in the words "I was in the Spirit" (1:10). He was so to speak transported into spiritual realms where normal expression would be out of place. We have an insight into this by Paul's words in 2 Cor. 12:1-4. The title and introduction tell us that God gave this revelation to the Lord Jesus for His servants through an angel to John, and that the events signified "must shortly come to pass". The message then was intended for those christians living when it was given, and for their immediate help. There were times of extreme danger and suffering through persecution. The whole picture of events leads up to the consummation of the last chapters where there is complete victory over sin and death. This assurance is specially needed in such times, and can never be out of place for the sincere believer.

### The Lord and His Churches

John's messages to the seven churches are preceded by an ascription of praise to the

Lord as the One Who washed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests thus giving us direct access to God. He follows with a vision of the Lord amidst the churches symbolised by lampstands, and the messengers of those churches by stars held in His right hand. Whenever there is a vision of God in scripture it is a vision of transcendent glory. To John the Son of Man among the lampstands was too terrible to look upon, so great was His glory. Language and thoughts defy full expression of it. The angels must surely be representatives in God's presence in the same way that Jesus speaks of the angels of the little ones (Matt. 18:10). We can hardly think one man in each church could be so spoken of. Does every assembly of Christ thus today have a heavenly representative? Why not? It is a sobering thought. The seven churches are surely representative of all churches, and the messages are certainly for all of us today. The commendations, the warnings and the gracious promises are as up-to-date as they were so far as we are able to identify ourselves with the saints of by-gone days. Our readings this month present us with the messages to four of the seven churches and we propose to look briefly at each in turn.

#### Ephesus

This town held the Temple of Diana, one of the "seven wonders of the world". It was therefore a centre of idolatry, and that meant vice. So a church of Christ in this city faced unpopularity and opposition. We would covet the commendations, and wonder how with such character and works there could be failure demanding repentance and a return to first works. But it is so, and a search of heart is necessary to discover that with all the virtues and works love is missing. How often do we as individuals look back to those early days when we came through the water with the joy of forgiveness and the determination to follow faithfully the One Who loved ME and gave Himself for ME? Has there not been a "falling away" from the first love? Do we practise 1 Cor. 13, or remember 1 John 4:19-21? The requirement for restoration to favour is remembrance, repentance and reformation. The reward for those now walking amongst the idolators is the tree of life in the garden of God.

#### Smyrna

Here is a poor and suffering church with more suffering to come but no condemnation,

only encouragement and promise of reward. Ought we to want otherwise? There is subtle danger in apparent success as the case of Ephesus teaches us.

#### Pergamum

This town was the capital of a province, and the centre of the worship of the serpent, justifying the title "Satan's seat". Here one member had been faithful until death, and the church maintained its stand for Jesus in a very difficult situation. Two grave charges are made, however showing that apostasy was incipient there. Balaam's fault was a love of gain by sinful deceit (2 Peter 2:15) and a subtle teaching of indulgence. The teaching of the Nicolaitans has never been satisfactorily explained but it appears also to have taught indulgence of the flesh. Any such weaknesses in a church must bring about its destruction. The overcomers in that community have promise of divine sustenance, and personal recognition.

#### Thyatira

We are reminded of Lydia at Philippi. This town made wool, linen and dyeing materials and was wealthy. The church had been active and faithful, but it tolerated either false teaching by a woman, or actual immorality. This will be punished in such a way that other churches will take warning. The gnostic teaching seems to have been accepted by some who claimed knowledge of spiritual powers of various degrees and kinds (the deep things of Satan). While those who accept the false teaching will perish, the faithful will receive the final authority, sharing their Lord's triumph.

R.B. SCOTT

"Every divinely appointed ordinance should be observed precisely as divine wisdom appointed it" - J.W. McGarvey

"It is a rare man who can forgive the person he has wronged".

It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent.

"Giving never empties the purse and loving never empties the heart".

**"HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE"**

by Paul S. Moffitt

THE first sixteen verses of Philippians chapter 2, from which the above words come, will be the text from which each of the lectures in this year's "B.C. TO B.C.", Mission Forum will be drawn. I feel that a study of this passage and its implications in our life now is both timely and relevant for each of us.

Probably there is no subject about which we hear more preaching, but which is any less understood, than the subject of evangelism. As preachers, we have taken such Biblical passages as this one, and from it preached, berated, condemned, and badgered our congregations into "doing personal work", but all the while, we have failed to see what such passages were really teaching. If anything, we have inadvertently turned people against any kind of evangelistic involvement.

But when we begin looking carefully and contextually at Biblical passages relative to evangelism, you begin to see that the New Testament writers never once condemned those early christians for not "doing personal work". To Paul and Peter, evangelism or "personal work" was not a task to be done, but a life to be lived. It was not viewed as a duty, standing out separate and apart from you, but was a part of the very fabric of your christian life.

We have made evangelism, whether personal or public, a task for the professionals. The bulk of our personal work workshops deal with such items as: which films to use, how to run the projector, how to find prospects, how to close the sale, "how to induce repentance", how to answer objections, etc., etc., etc. It looks more like we are trying to teach people how to manipulate men into the church, rather than showing men to the Saviour. Contrast this with the New Testament emphasis, and there you will find that the emphasis is on spiritual growth, on becoming the kind of people God wants us to be. When we become what God wants us to be, we will do what God wants us to do. Read 2 Peter 1, verses 3-11.

Fortunately, some are seeing this lack in our spiritual lives, so a new but more Biblical sound is beginning to sound forth in our personal work workshops. And we hope that our Mission Forum this year will echo the same.

Let's get evangelism away from the professionals, and back into the heart and life of each Christian.

(This article was sent to us by brother Severson, B.C., Canada, and taken from 'Beaming Christ to British Columbia'. He reckons the article states what he's being saying for years.)

**"HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. John 1:11"**

They gave Him a Cross instead of a Throne  
When Jesus, the King, came unto His own.  
On His sacred head they planted a crown,  
And with wicked hands they pressed it hard down.

No circlet of gold with diamond and gem—  
But long piercing thorns formed His diadem.  
They gave Him a reed to hold in His hand,  
A long purple cloak to make Him look grand.  
The things that they did, time ne'er will erase;  
They plucked out His beard and spat in his face.  
They showered Him with blows and other abuse,

Then kneeling, they chanted, "Hail King of the Jews".

And when of this sport they'd all had their fill,  
They took Him away to calvary's hill.

They gave Him a cross instead of a Throne  
When Jesus, the King, came unto His own.

\* \* \*

When you consider, Friend, all He has borne,  
Does your heart give Him a Cross-or a Throne?

J.J. Smith,

**POINTS ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

- 1 Make Christ the Centre of Your Life.
- 2 Add the Qualities Mentioned in 2 Pet.1:4.
- 3 Pray Ferently and Constantly.
- 4 Be Humble and Steadfast in Teaching Others of Christ.
- 5 Study the Scriptures Regularly, Carefully and Prayerfully.
- 6 Always attend the Worship Assemblies.
- 7 Practice Hospitality with Brethren and Others.
- 8 Cultivate Patience: Be Forgiving.
- 9 Learn the Joy of Giving.
- 10 Be Pure in Thought and Life as we War Against Temptations.
- 11 Desire Sincerely to Grow Spiritually.
- 12 Fear God.
- 13 Never Be Ashamed to "Stand Up for Jesus."

From "Faith & Obedience" Australia.

### "LETTER OF APPRECIATION"

(I am happy to print the following letter received by brother James Grant of Wallacestone, just as it was received. It is fairly self explanatory, and brethren wishing to add weight to the help already given should contact brother Grant, at 45 Kirkwood Avenue, Redding, Falkirk, who, no doubt, will appreciate your interest. Ed.)

THE church here in Malawi, C. Africa would like to take this opportunity to thank all the congregations who helped raise the money for buying Bibles and hymns in Malawi in order that we might distribute.

Since we received the money we did not have a time to write a note of thanks, this is because we are always very busy in the Lord's work. We want the Church at Wallacestone to help us to thank all the brethren and May God bless the work that is being done everywhere to spread the Gospel.

We hereby publicly express our appreciation for your generosity. Not only do we appreciate

the help sent, but we appreciate also words of encouragement received every now and then from Bro. James Grant. Definitely, we need your prayers. Thank you, those contributed.

By Davidson C. Kasambwe  
Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 573  
Blantyre - Malawi

### COMING EVENTS

Blackburn, New Wellington Street,  
Gospel Mission from Oct. 25th to Nov. 2nd.  
Speaker: Bro. L. Daniell (Bristol).

Meetings:

Sat. 25th Oct. Tea 6p.m. Meeting 7.30p.m.

Sun. 26th Oct. Meeting 6p.m.

Tues., Wed., Thurs., Sat., 7.30 p.m.

Sun. 2nd Nov. 6p.m.

Refreshments on Saturday Meetings.

ALL WELCOME T. Tyson (Sec.)

Kentish Town : 104th Anniversary Meetings  
October 4th and 5th. Mission with Bro. W. Murrell for two weeks. Visitors welcome as usual.  
R.B. Scott

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